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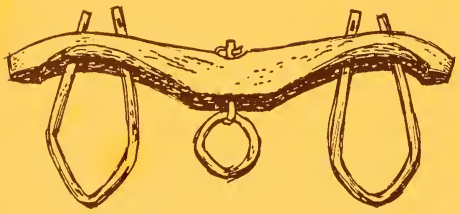
A Monument to The Memory Of John Wilkes Booth

LINCOLN ROOM



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A MONUMENT

to

THE MEMORY OF

JOHN WILKES BOOTH

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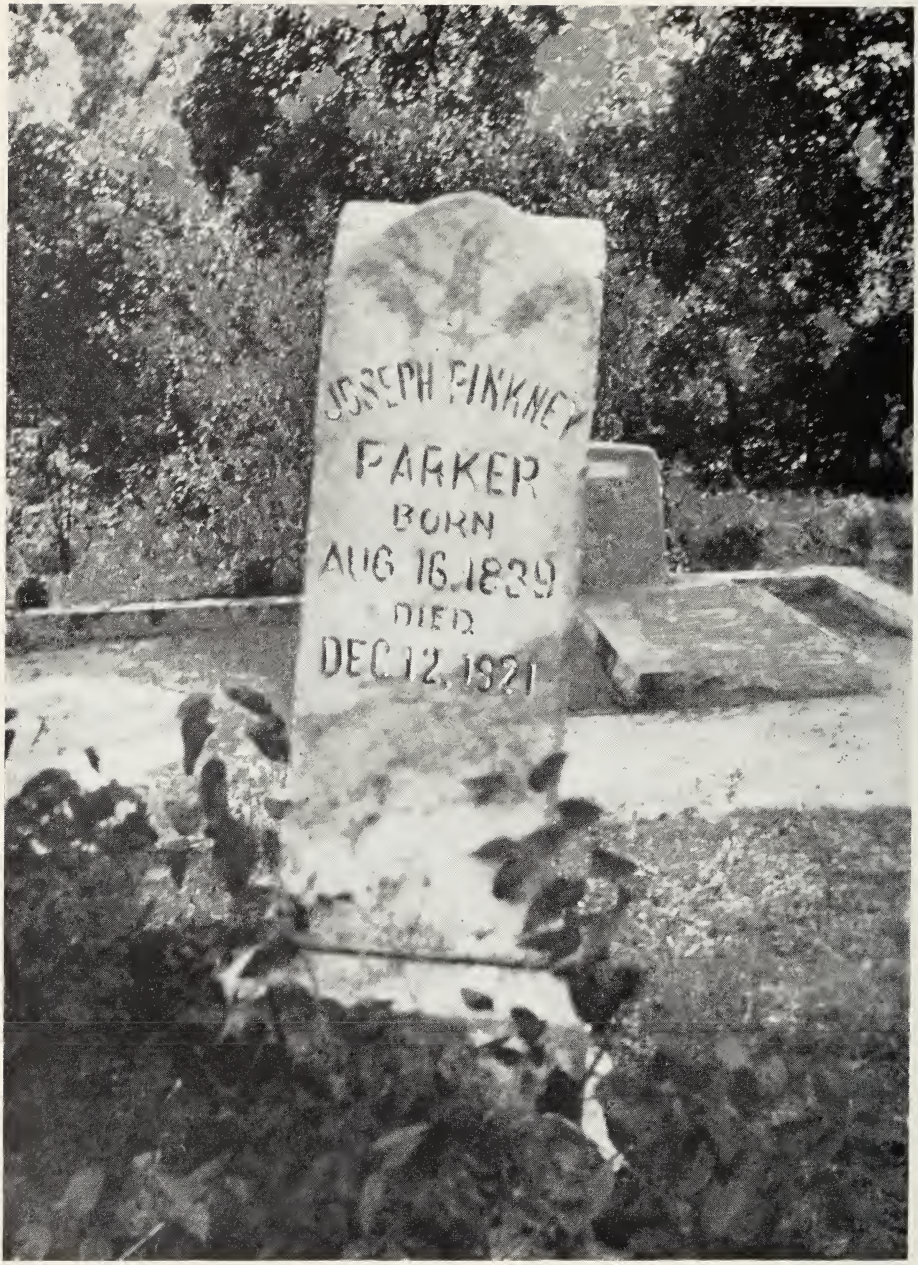
Lincoln Room

To
Haylow and Milo Parker
whose patriotism
can never be questioned
and without whose help
this story
could not have been compiled.



Photo—Ann S. McClelland

A MONUMENT TO THE MEMORY OF JOHN WILKES BOOTH

It is such a quiet, peaceful little spot in the rear of Oakwood Cemetery in Troy, Alabama. Here is a small stone, some three and one-half feet high, leaning a little as if it had become tired of standing erect. On one side, it bears the legend, Joseph Pinkney/ Parker/Born/Aug 16, 1839/Died/Dec 12, 1921. On the other side appears his record in the Confederate Army: Served through the War of 1861-1865/in Company A/2nd Ga Btl. Infty./Wrights Brigade/Mohone's Div./AP Hills Corps/Army Northern Virginia.

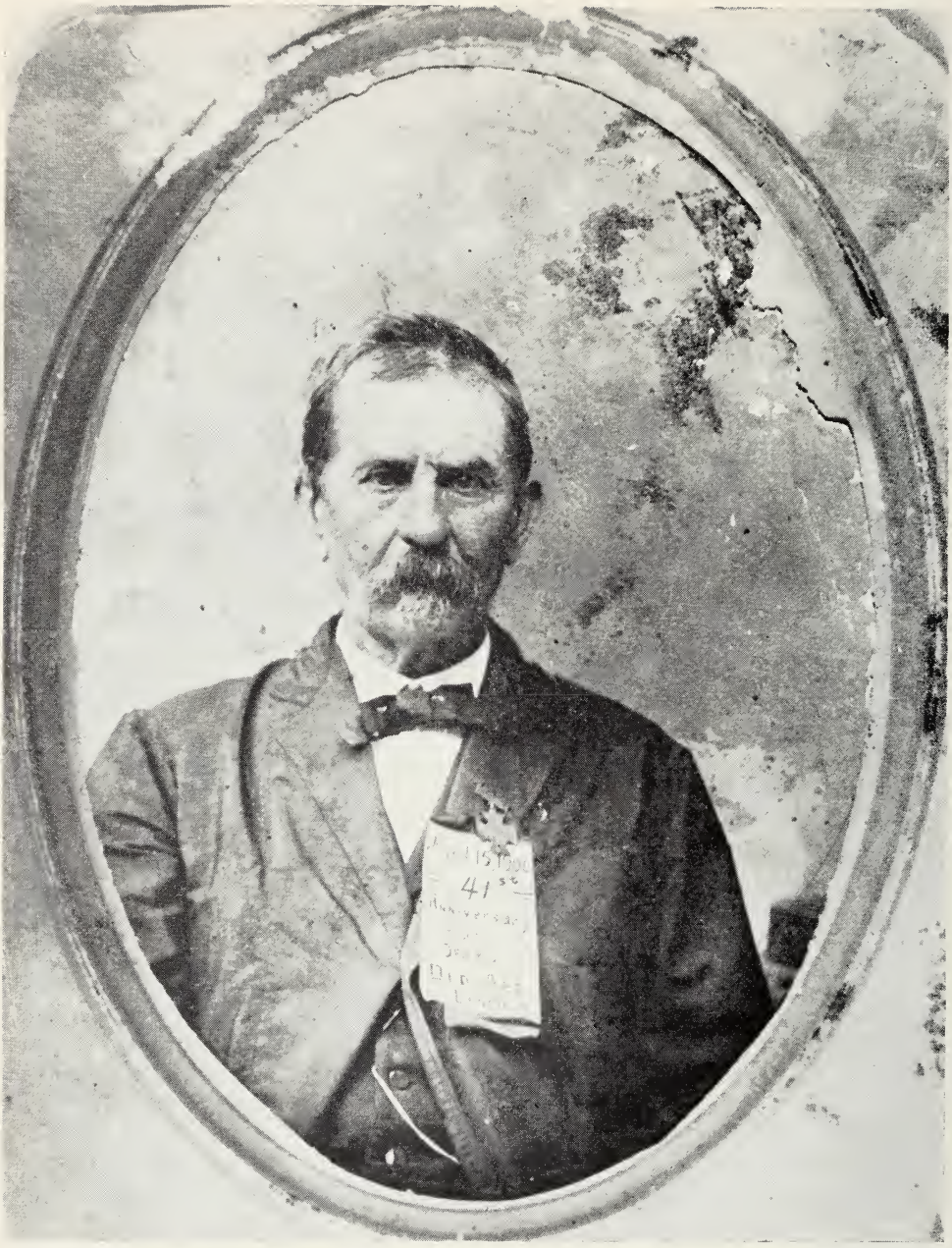
No one could believe by looking at this marker that it could possibly have been the storm center for years in the beautiful little town of Troy, Alabama. But when it was first erected, it was not as a marker for a tomb, but a memorial to an assassin and carried this inscription: Erected by/Pink Parker/In honor of/ John Wilks (sic.)/Booth/for killing old/Abe Lincoln.

So many things have been told about Pink Parker and his monument which do not agree with the facts, that we are going to attempt to tell the story as we have been able to get it from his grandsons and people in Troy who knew him and loved him.

But first, let us see the picture as it was in the summer of 1921 when Pink was already more than half blind, sick and living with his son in Georgia.

The Brooklyn Eagle of Sunday morning, June 5, 1921, had this to say:

> Mrs. C. D. Brooks, president of the Woman's League of Republican Voters in Alabama, has issued a call to good citizens, whatever their party affiliations, to join with the League in plans to remove the monument to John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of Abraham Lincoln, which is still standing in Troy, Alabama, where there is also a State Normal School. This was erected by popular subscription in 1866. The sentiment that condoned the political murder of the most lovable man in history is a curious thing to study after the lapse of more than half a century. The whole South of today honors Lincoln's memory. There are no pilgrims to the grave of John Wilkes Booth or to his monument.
>
> Yet the temporary existence of the sentiment that led to the erection of this monument is not surprising. Booth's crime in Ford's Theater, April 14, 1865, was concededly not actuated by personal hate, or by any motive, save the hysterical passions of a hysterical, bad actor. And the long conspiracy trials by court-martial that followed the crime and Booth's death as a hunted fugitive on April 26, trials in which Jefferson Davis, the former President of the Confederacy, was at first named as a factor in the plot, and which in the judgment of some North-



Photograph of "Pink" Parker taken the day he erected his monument to Booth.

ern lawyers as well as Southerners resulted in the "judicial murder" of Mrs. Surrat, were calculated to inspire a certain tolerance for what Booth had done, at least in certain sections of the Cotton States.

The Ford's Theater tragedy hung for many years like a pall upon the spirits of the assassin's brother, whom all America knew and admired, Edwin Booth. We may assume that Edwin Booth never saw the monument at Troy, Ala., and that he was deeply shocked when he learned of its erection. Historians have long realized how much the South lost by the killing of Lincoln, the one man who might have made reconstruction possible on lines at once broad and humane. So Mrs. Brooks' plea is reasonable. Troy should remove the Booth monument. It is the only monument to the memory of an assassin that stands on American soil.

On June 9, the editor of the Troy Herald wrote the editor of the Brooklyn Eagle, as follows:

Editor Brooklyn Daily Eagle:

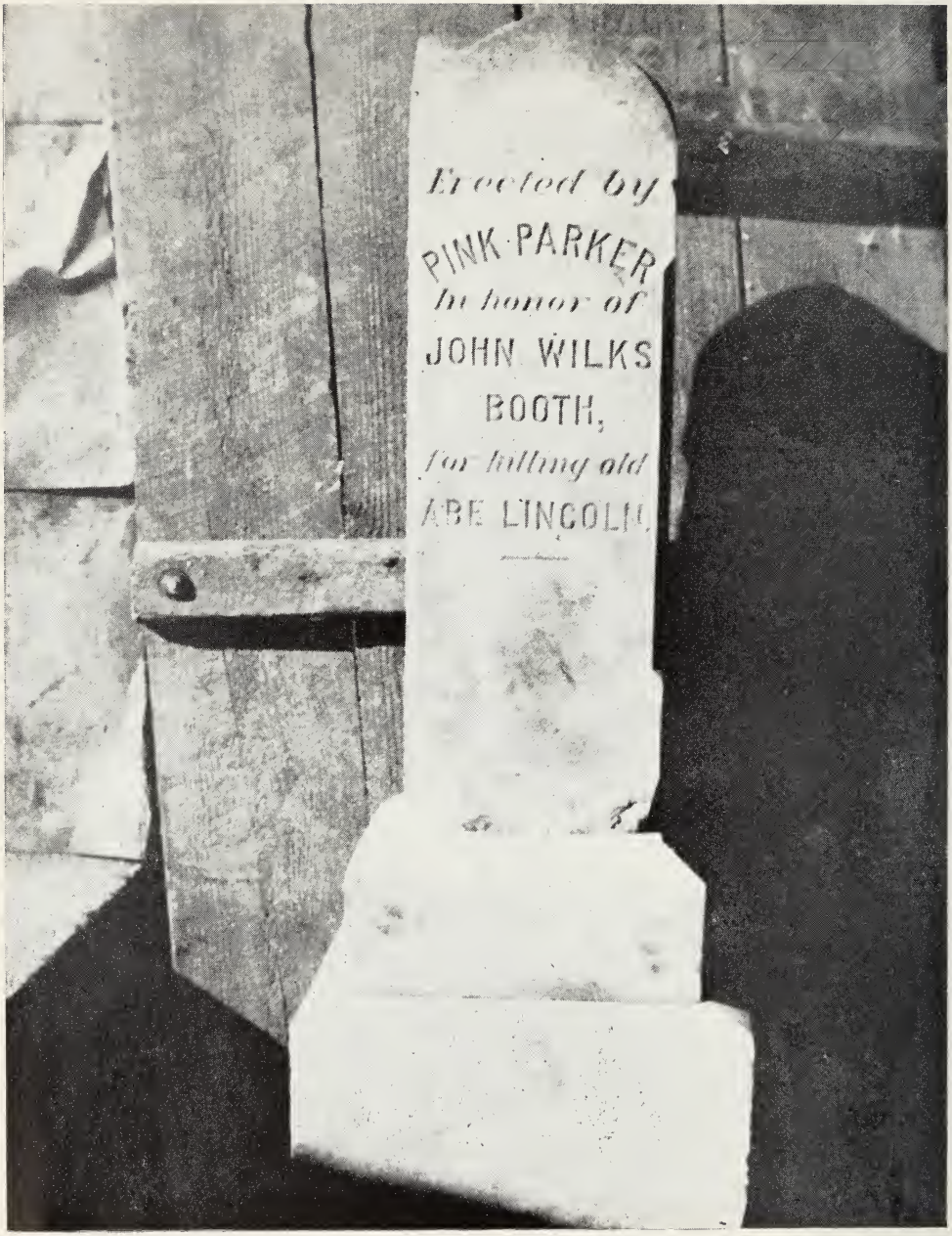
An article appearing in your paper of recent date, and which was reproduced in many papers of this section, headed "An Assassin's Monument," has come to the notice of the writer. We regret very much that this article appeared in your paper because of the fact that the true facts in the case were not given. However, this is not the first time our city has been given undue publicity regarding this monument. Several years ago the St. Louis Post-Dispatch gave a full page writeup of it.

I will state the facts in the case for your information and trust you will see fit to clear up the matter as the people of our city do not appreciate the publicity we are getting out of this thing.

The monument, a very small one, something similar to a small head-stone we have all seen in small cemeteries, bears the inscription "erected by Pink Parker in memory of John Wilkes Booth for the killing of old Abe Lincoln." The little stone was set up in the front yard of this old man, and we want it thoroughly understood that it was erected by Mr. Parker himself and paid for with his own money. He says himself that not one penny was contributed or solicited.

Some few months ago, this old man almost lost his eyesight and moved to another State to make his home with his son. Upon leaving, he disposed of his property here. Before he sold his property, however, a wind storm visited our city and blew the stone down. The new owner of the property has never re-erected the stone and will not. And now the stone lies flat with the inscription buried in the ground and is not noticeable from the street.

The people of this town did not approve of the erection of such a monument when it was set up some 15 years ago. It was seen by very few people, as the old man's home was not


Erected by
PINK PARKER
In honor of
JOHN WILKS
BOOTH,
for killing old
ABE LINCOLN

on a principal street, and the people of this city now really are glad that the monument no longer stands.

We are making the facts known to you simply because we do not care for the publicity we are getting about this matter and now that we have stated the facts to you we believe you will be fair enough to the people of this section to so state the facts in your excellent paper.

We have reproduced your article in our paper with our comment and also given notice that in case we could have the facts published in your paper we would also reproduce it in our paper.

If you care to do your Southern friends this favor, kindly mail a copy of your paper to this office that we may pass on to our readers the correction of a mistake that does a gross injustice to the citizenship of our little city.

B. G. McCalman
Editor Troy, Ala., Herald.

The next newspaper article we are able to find appears in the Washington Post Sunday, July 17, 1921:

Troy, Ala., Compels him to remove tablet to Lincoln's Slayer. Special to the Washington Post.

Troy, Ala., July 16.—By order of the town council a monument to John Wilkes Booth, assassin of Abraham Lincoln, which has stood for a number of years in the yard of Pink Parker, a resident of this place, has been removed and its owner instructed not to restore it to its former position. It now occupies an obscure place in his barn.

The monument, which is a tablet of granite about three feet high, has given this community a certain notoriety for a number of years and repeated efforts have been made to induce its owner to remove it. Until now he has always refused, insisting that he had a right to keep whatever he liked on his property.

Parker, who was a policeman, is a veteran of the Confederate Army and has long taken pride in a description sometimes given him as "the bitterest rebel in the South." He never took the oath of allegiance after the civil war. When he first concluded to put up a monument to Booth he had the stone cut and inscribed and then offered it to Troy to be placed in a public park. When the offer was declined he set it up in his yard. Of late so much criticism was directed at this monument that he built a board fence around it. The stone bore the inscription: "Sacred to the memory of John Wilkes Booth who died a hero."

Joseph Pinkney Parker was born in Coffee County, Alabama in 1839. He had just finished as a student at Spring Hill Academy when the War broke out. He left immediately for the front, leaving behind him on a well-stocked plantation, his sister and the slaves which every well-to-do Alabaman possessed at that time. Four years later, he returned to find his farm overgrown with weeds, his stock and his slaves disappeared and his sister embittered by her treatment received at the hands of the Northern soldiers. The property was soon eaten up by taxes, so he took a position as a "walker" on the railroad tracks carrying with him maul and spikes to keep the tracks repaired.

He became a school teacher, but the parents of the children were too poor to pay the salary, or even to clothe the pupils properly. As years went on, he did regain some of his financial position and built for himself and his family a very comfortable home in Troy, just a block or two from the famous trace which Andrew Jackson used in his battles against the Indians in Florida.

Pink was a devout member of the Baptist Church. He never called his wife anything but "Darling" and taught his children to do the same. He became a police officer in the little town of Troy and a much-respected citizen. But he had one obsession which was so deeply instilled in him that he never was able to overcome it; a deep and lasting hate for the North, its people, and particularly for the man who was the sixteenth President of the United States; a man so great that, today, Abraham Lincoln is revered in the South, together with the famous champion of the Lost Cause, Robert E. Lee.

As Pink Parker went on nursing his wrath from year to year, the North and the name of Lincoln would cause him to burst forth into the most impassioned flights of profanity which not merely astonished but shocked his friends. The pastor of the Baptist Church labored with him to stop these outbursts. But they continued and Pink was finally removed from the church rolls for his profanity. Rather ruefully, Pink remarked to a friend, "It wasn't quite fair. I know all the deacons in that church and any one of them can cuss better than I can."

Time went on and each succeeding April 15, Pink would make for himself a paper badge indicating that this date was the "Anniversary of the Death of Old Abe Lincoln." Years passed, the idea came into his head that he would erect a monument to the memory of John Wilkes Booth. Apparently, he did not share this intention with anyone, so it was a surprise to the citizens of Troy when this monument, some four feet high, was erected in the yard of Pink's home. His neighbors did not like the idea, but they did like Pink Parker. The strange thing about the erection of this monument is the fact that it was not erected until 1906, in spite of the fact that

the newspapers of the 20's stated that it had been erected by popular subscription by the citizens of Troy in 1866.

No one paid much attention to the monument. Automobiles were not as plentiful as they are today and traffic did not flow through Troy as it does now. Pink was pretty proud of his handiwork and he used to regale his grandsons with the story of his sending President Theodore Roosevelt a postcard inviting him to come and visit the monument. He further informed the President that while he couldn't furnish a carriage for him, he would get him a dray hauled by a couple of mules.

When Pink's grandsons would twit him on the fact that he might not be able to get along with the Yankees he found in Heaven, his eyes would twinkle and he would say, "Well, I don't suppose I will find enough up there to bother me."

When, in 1921, Mrs. C. D. Brooks, who at the time was the president of the Woman's League of Republican Voters in Alabama, heard of this monument, her pride for the state of Alabama was so strong that she began immediately to have the monument destroyed. Mrs. Brooks received letters from all over the country supporting her stand. One of the most interesting letters which came to her was dated June 8, 1921, El Paso, Texas, from Alexander Donald McEvoy, who states that "in the year 1879, I met Booth in Buenos Aires, Argentine Republic." That letter would have pleased Pink Parker, for he always maintained that Booth was not the man whom Boston Corbett shot.

But three or four years prior to 1921, some boys pulled down the monument for a Hallowe'en stunt. No one had ever bothered to replace it. In 1922 after the death of Mr. Parker in December, 1921, his sons had the stone taken out to the monument works where the scars made by souvenir hunters were removed, together with the legend concerning John Wilkes Booth. The monument was then re-set as a memorial to Joseph Pinkney Parker.

EPILOGUE

Many times I have wondered how an article came to be written. For any one who is interested, this is the way this story came into being.

Milo Parker was enrolled in one of our advanced classes in Jacksonville, Fla., in the winter of 1949. One evening he paid a tribute to Abraham Lincoln which fairly made my spine tingle. I have often wished that I had requested him to write it out.

After the class was over, Milo came up to me and told me that he was the grandson of "Pink" Parker who had erected the monument to Booth. Of course, I had heard of it but knew so little about the matter that I began with the help of Milo and his brother Haylow to dig into the whole thing.

We made a trip to Troy and spent a couple of days talking to people who well remembered the whole incident. And then very fortunately for us, in one of our classes in Miami we found that one of our members, Walter Storm, was the brother-in-law of Mrs. C. D. Brooks. Mrs. Brooks turned over to us her voluminous correspondence concerning the Booth monument and in many ways was of great assistance to us.

But to Milo and Haylow Parker, who furnished us with pictures of their grandfather and the original stone, just before it was shaped into its present form, we (Ann and I) owe a debt of friendship which will take a long time to repay.

Stewart W. McClelland
Sponsor Dale Carnegie Courses.

August 28, 1951
Indianapolis, Ind.

If my two friends,
Dr. John Ferrara and Warren L. Jones, Esq.,
both of Jacksonville, Fla.,
had not prodded me by their eloquent silence,
I would never have gotten
this little pamphlet published.

350 Autographed Copies

No. 7

To Harry & Marion Prath; just another addition to the Lovecraft field to the people who will appreciate it.

Howard Phillips Lovecraft

Jan 19, 1932

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